



ourplace
Hope and Belonging

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hope



The Reality of Pandora



By Julian Daly

I'm not going to sugarcoat it, the 900 block of Pandora Ave in Victoria where Our Place has its community centre can be a distressing and scary place.

When I walk down Pandora, as I do every day, I see people sprawled out on the sidewalks, slipping in and out of consciousness, and my heart breaks. I consciously check they are breathing, that their skin isn't turning blue from drug poisoning, knowing how many have died on our streets.

I see the despair, just as you do, and it fills me with the same sense of anger, frustration and concern as I'm sure fills you.

I receive phone calls and messages almost daily from people who want us to do more, who say we are to blame for what's happening on Pandora, or that we somehow enable and support it. The sad fact is that while we have control over what happens inside our building – which is a safe and well managed space providing meals, washrooms and medical supports – we have no control or jurisdiction over what happens outside our doors. Only the police and bylaw have jurisdiction there.

Frankly, I am as powerless to do anything about the systemic issues – unattended to mental health and addictions, and lack of appropriate housing – as any member of the public. Every staff member and volunteer at Our Place, perhaps more than anyone, wants to see a better outcome for those who are existing rough on Pandora. But all we can do is continue to raise our voices, pleading for more supports: housing, detox, recovery beds, complex care – even involuntary care for those folk whose needs are beyond our expertise.

It is only when these systemic issues are addressed that we will see real change on the block. The reality is we are in the middle of a crisis, and we need, as a whole society, to recognize it for what it is – and act.

If you could hold up a crystal ball and show a five-year-old that in 30 years they would be spread-eagled on a sidewalk, digging raw fingers into cracks in the sidewalk to find a crumb of spilled Meth, would they choose that life? I don't believe so but, as a society, we aren't providing any escape.

If we continue down this road, the death rate will climb, criminality will increase, and despair will deepen.

Abandoning people to their addictions and mental health breakdowns on our streets is no longer tenable. We need to do more. We need to provide a way out for folk – and, believe me, most want it – a route to a better life.

In short, we need to treat the disease, not just the symptoms.

- Julian Daly is the CEO of Our Place Society

On Remembrance Day, and always, we respectfully honour the veterans who have courageously served, and continue to serve, our country during times of war, conflict and peace. Our Place is proud to display three works of art at our 919 Pandora community centre by local artist Paul Archer, who has portrayed the plight of veterans facing homelessness.



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TV SCENE INSIDE

What gives you hope every day?

We asked members of our management team what hope at Our Place means to them:

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Julian Daly,
Chief Executive Officer
(2 year OPS employee)

I am filled with hope when I speak with family members (clients) who have every reason to feel hopeless and give up on life but who, with support from us, keep going and make real changes in their lives, for the better. Their courage, determination and resilience gives me hope, personally and professionally. Their hope becomes my hope.



Jordan Cooper, ▲
Director of Services
(16 year OPS employee)

Hope for me comes from the family members themselves. To see family members, tackle each day despite their situation, challenges and barriers is inspiring. There is hope for each individual that Our Place supports. I have learned over the last 20 years in this work that people will surprise you. The person that may seem like the most “hopeless” will often be the one that is able to overcome incredible odds and improve their life.



Bob Frank, ▲
Manager of Facilities
(20 year OPS employee)

Through the Love we are able to offer; we can awaken Love in those we serve. Working at Our Place Society allows me a platform to experience this.

Dawn Barr,
Manager of Volunteers
(4 year OPS employee)

Our incredible volunteers are amazing people who bring their time and talents into each role every day with renewed hope and enthusiasm for making a difference in the lives of others.

Leah Young, Director of Housing & Shelters (8 year OPS employee)

Hope for me comes from seeing the work being done by the housing supportive staff. Everyday I see and read how staff work alongside residents to be connected to much needed services; to be there for someone in a time of need; accept individuals unconditionally; advocate for residents and support them in staying housed; and experience both joy and anguish with residents. I continue to come into work everyday as I know that staff inspire hope for those we serve.

“We must accept finite disappointment, but never lose infinite hope.”

– Martin Luther King, Jr.



Cathy Mingo, ▲
Manager of Housing & Shelters
(2 year OPS employee)

Watching the face of a resident at one of our housing sites, as they told me that they have found market rental housing and will be moving to be closer to their family, gives me hope. They were so animated, smiling a smile of sheer relief, happiness, and wonder. I found myself smiling with them, caught up in the joyous moment. Hope exists in all our residents' hearts and minds and we, with time, are brought into their world to share such life-changing hopeful events such as this. Hope is often a memory or a fleeting dream but when realized, life-changing.

Adam Flegel,
Manager of the Community Centre
(3 month OPS employee)

Hope is a word that means potential and resilience. I believe that everyone has this no matter the circumstances. Hope is seeing humility in everyone and recognizing the greatness that can be contributed to the world.

Lee Sundquist,
Manager of New Roads
(1 year OPS employee)

What brings me hope is when I see the light come back into someone's eyes and they move away from the darkness and despair of their addiction and towards a life and future in recovery!



Grant McKenzie, ▲
Director of Communications
(10 year OPS employee)

I find hope in my daily interactions with people on the street. The big picture is daunting, so I focus on making a difference in individuals. It can be anything from taking the time to chat, getting a bus pass for them, connecting them with a paramedic or even just letting them know about a special meal.

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